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Saturday, July 7, 2012

POLITICS VOTER ID

Voter ID Critics Slam Measure, Seek to Delay Trial

by Anna Whitney | April 24, 2012 | [12 Comments](#)

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photo illustration by: Todd Wiseman

As Texas' legal battle with the federal government over its controversial voter ID law presses on, opponents of the measure on Tuesday argued that the law isn't necessary and that it will discriminate against minority, immigrant, elderly, young, disabled and student voters.

"This law is unnecessary and unjust," said Wendy Weiser, director of the Democracy Program at the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University's law school.

Wiser spoke about the law on a conference call — organized by New America Media, a

collaboration of ethnic news organizations — along with Myrna Perez, senior council at the Brennan Center, and state Rep. [Trey Martinez Fischer](#), D-San Antonio. The conference call is part of a series being held through November in response to what critics call restrictive voting laws and executive actions that have passed across the country since the beginning of 2011. Advocates of the Texas law, which would require registered voters to present photo identification before they cast a ballot, say the law is a safeguard against voter fraud. But the law's implementation is on hold as the U.S. Department of Justice seeks to get Texas to prove that it will not discriminate against minority voters.

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The DOJ [rejected](#) the state's request for preclearance of the voter ID law because the agency said Texas did not prove that the law would not discriminate against minority voters. Attorney General [Greg Abbott](#) filed a lawsuit against the department in January, seeking immediate implementation of the bill. Yesterday, the department and opponents of the voter ID bill asked the court to delay the trial, which is set for July 9, said Lauren Bean, a spokeswoman for Abbott. "Texas has complied promptly with all discovery requests. We have no incentive to delay this litigation and are seeking a prompt ruling from the D.C. court," Bean said. Martinez Fischer, who is also the chairman of the Mexican American Legislative Caucus, which filed a motion along with the Texas NAACP to intervene in the state's voter ID lawsuit, said that of the 13 million Texas votes cast in the 2008 and 2010 elections, there was only one case of the type of alleged voter impersonation the measure seeks to halt. "This is a solution in search of a problem," Martinez Fischer said.

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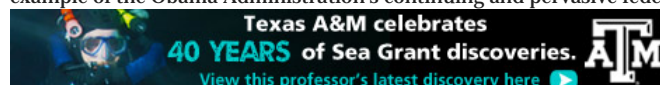
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In the conference call, Martinez Fischer said he believes the law will disenfranchise many voters, such as his mother, who has Parkinson's disease and cannot drive. A Hispanic registered voter is at least 46.5 percent more likely than a non-Hispanic registered voter to lack the required identification, according to the state's data, and 81 of the state's 254 counties do not have a Texas Department of Public Safety office where people can obtain the identification that would be required to vote.

"If you don't have a driver's license, there's a high likelihood that you're not driving and would have to travel in excess of 100 miles to get to the nearest DPS," Martinez Fischer said. "There are some significant and severe logistical challenges that must be overcome for thousands of voters."

Advocates of the law have slammed the federal government, saying that it is Washington infringing on Texas' ability to prevent election fraud.

David Norcross, chairman of the Republican National Lawyers Association, called the DOJ's preclearance rejection "a prime example of a government agency putting partisan politics above reality and the law," and Gov. [Rick Perry](#) in a statement called the decision "yet another example of the Obama Administration's continuing and pervasive federal overreach."



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